## Deborah Husak

## Observation/Reflection #1: Starting From the Beginning

How a teacher greets students, takes care of logistics, and begins his or her lessons is CRUCIAL! During this observation, focus on how class begins. Where is your CT *before* class begins? What is he or she doing? Using the clock on the wall, determine *when* your CT establishes order and begins class. How did she/he start their lesson? How is homework from the previous night reviewed/collected/assessed? How does your CT *engage* students during the opening of the lesson? Is the approach your CT used during this lesson consistent with what you read in "Teach Like a Pirate."

The first class of the day, which was ninth grade Accelerated Earth and Physical Science, began at 7:30am. All students were in the room at least five minutes before the bell rang and were seated at their tables with their notebooks out turned to the page with their homework on it, their pens and three ring binders were also on the table in front of them. They put their backpacks and other materials under the table. The students were talking to each other as I entered the room and put my backpack away. The CT was in the back of the room preparing the handouts that she would be using that day. When the bell rang the CT went to the front of the room and cued the class into being quiet by putting her finger to her lips and saying “sssh” which worked quite well. She asked students if they noticed anyone missing and did a quick visual check to take attendance which she recorded on the computer. Attendance only took a few minutes.

Since I was there, my CT had me check the homework while she began the lesson. She told me how to recognize a complete homework assignment by looking for the appropriate beginning and ends of the required work and gave me a date stamp to stamp on the notebook page with completed homework on it. I know from a previous discussion that she will be collecting and grading notebooks for completeness at a later date. She started with a review of the main concepts they had read for homework while I checked and stamped homework. Homework checking only took 5 minutes. My CT had the students highlight important vocabulary in their notebooks from their homework as they discussed the topic (galaxies). She showed them many examples of types of galaxies. She had them write important ideas in their notebooks. We passed out the worksheets and colored pencils so the students could complete the first worksheet which was about visible light and the electromagnetic spectrum. The students were very engaged during the period. We walked among them making sure they were on track and correcting any errors. My CT reviewed the information on the worksheets after they were done with the worksheets. She played a fun song about the Doppler Effect then announced their homework (which was about the Doppler Effect) before the dismissal bell rang. I observed two other classes that followed a similar beginning and instructional pattern.

My CT has established clear expectations of how her students will be ready for class and what being ready should look like. Her students are all ready to begin when the bell rings. In our EDC 415 class we are discussing management approaches and having definite start of class expectations and procedures is an excellent managerial approach which I plan to implement. I don’t want to have to tell students at the start of every class what to get out, what not to have out, and where their homework should be. I hope to define what being “ready for class” involves on the first day of class and make sure students are automatically getting ready as soon as they enter every day after that. My CT makes attendance quick because she knows all of her students and is able to quickly assess if they are there. There were twenty or less students in each class so this technique worked in these classes. I think that for a larger group, I may need to have seating charts to refer to. I liked that their homework was incorporated into the class period. It gave the message that homework was a valuable part of the lesson and not just something to check off at the beginning.

My CT has a lot of the “Teach Like a Pirate” attributes. She conveys a sense of passion for her subject and remains enthusiastic even when the subject is not likely to thrill the students. She has excellent rapport with her students and knows their learning styles and activities. At one point in the class students were excitedly explaining how they saw Venus the night before and she knew that they had been at a school soccer game and asked which field they were in. She is incorporating new teaching techniques into her lesson which aligns with the “Ask and Analyze” attributes of a Pirate. She is having her advanced classes view power points and do online activities at home so they can focus on hands on activities and clarification in the classroom. The students were engaged in the activities and discussion for the 45 minute class period. I think that I would try to have a more definite “hook” at the beginning of the lesson to get the students enthused about the content. I am thinking that she may have hooks on other days. I am looking forward to learning more in this classroom!